

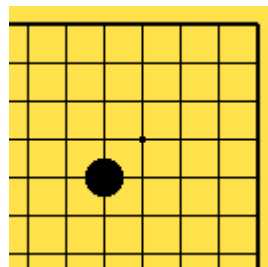
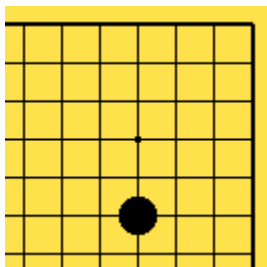
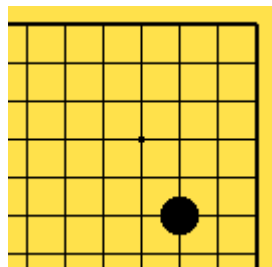
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Gentle Joseki, part VII by Pieter Mioch

The Patterns

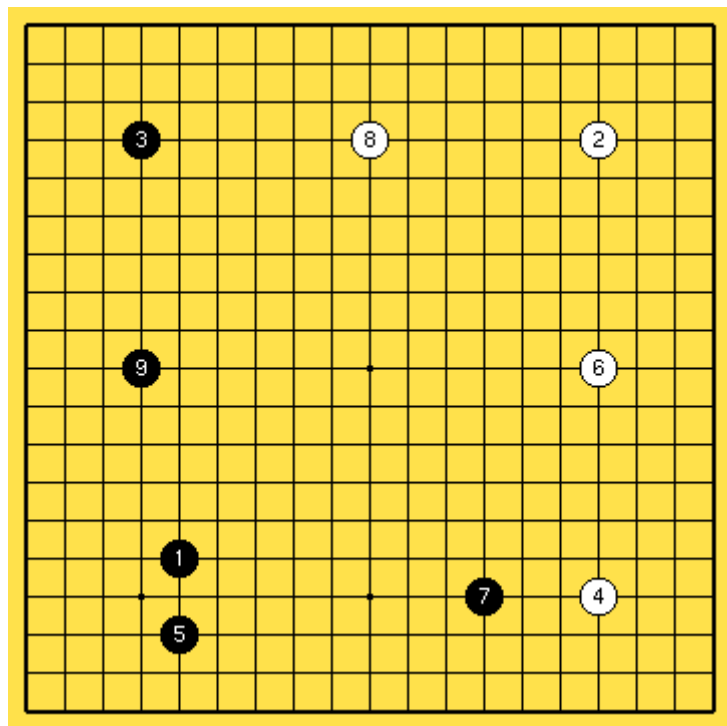
Non- Standard Moves



The corner plays in dia 1, 2 and 3 have at least two things in common. One you guessed already I presume; they are not standard opening moves. The second similarity may come as a bit of a surprise though: these moves are all recognized as playable and sometimes appear in pro games. Like a first move on tengen (10-10 point) the plays at the 6-3 point, the 6-4 point and the 5-5 point, however, are difficult to understand. I for one have not really a clue what they're all about. This does not, however, stop me from freely using them in my games. They are, unfortunately, quite hard to put to good use. In the future I might come back at the moves in dia 1 and 2. In this episode of Gentle Joseki I would like to focus on the move in dia 3, the 5-5 point.

Diagram 1, 2 & 3

67 Years Ago



Black: Onoda Chiyotaro 5d
White: Kitani Minoru 5d
January, 1934, black wins by resign.

Recently the young (22) Japanese talent **Yamashita Keigo**, 7 dan, has gained popularity because of his unorthodox opening moves. He did this in such a splendid way that he conquered Kobayashi Koichi in 2000 for the Gosei title and won the best of five, three games to two. It is not true, however that young Yamashita is making these things up all by himself. Dia 4 shows that the 5-5 point was already played, in a serious fashion, well over 60 years ago. By the look of this game it might well have been played yesterday.

Diagram 4

Let's first answer the question, which surely must be on your mind: "Why on earth would anybody feel like playing the 5-5 move"? My joseki dictionary, the "Joseki Daijiten" I occasionally glance in has an excellent, if not completely satisfactory, answer. *"Playing a move at the 5-5 point has the advantage of having a big psychological effect on your opponent"*

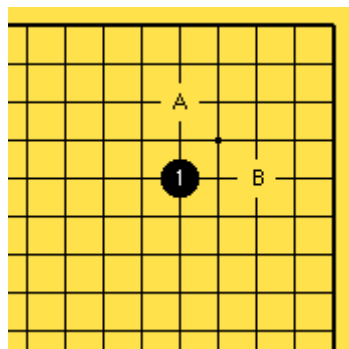
If this were the whole story then everybody and his brother would be playing at the 5-5 point but, as of today, that is certainly not the case. Usually when doing Gentle Joseki I avoid opening my joseki dictionary and instead try to explain things in my own words. As an exception I'll give you the rest of the text, it seems to be only fair to let you share in the Daijiten's infinite wisdom... *"It is however, undeniably the 5-5 play does not help much in terms of territory. It is a move which naturally goes for influence..."*

...Well, since there does not seem to be any logical reason for choosing to play at 5-5 let's switch to a different strategy in our crusade for wisdom, knowledge and blood.

A very good reason for **not** playing at the 5-5 point is because of the lack of proper follow-up moves. As a matter of fact, this is one of the major drawbacks of all the symmetrical opening moves, the 3-3 point, the 4-4 point as well as the 5-5 point, not to mention tengen... Symmetrical corner moves do not make it easy to decide where to play a second move if the chance arises.

(The most effective way of guarding the corner and getting profit is the ordinary "shimari", the shape you get with a move at the 4-3 point and the 5-3 point. I've been over this a couple of times before and will skip a detailed explanation. If you're interested please go through earlier episodes of Gentle Joseki.)

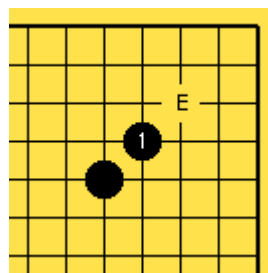
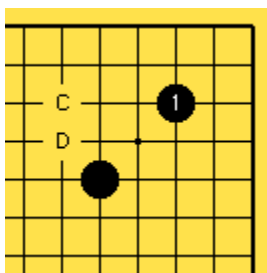
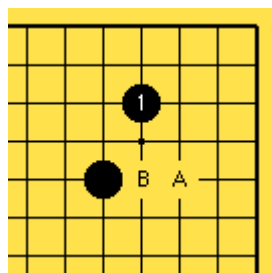
The 5-5 Formation



The best thing black can do seems to be to reinforce the corner with a move at A or B as shown in dia 5. Even with this additional move, however, it is still in the dark exactly how many points black can expect in the corner. To put it in a different way, playing 2 moves black still didn't make one point of territory!

Diagram 5

Not Very Sensible



As is shown in dia 6, 7 and 8 black's other follow-up moves do not make a whole lot of sense. Black can try going for territory with 1 in dia 6. In that case, however, black would very much like the 5-5 stone to be at either A or B. Black 1 in dia 7 is also an unnatural move, now the 5-5 stone would be more useful at C or D. Black 1 in dia 8 is really funny looking, it would be something if it would be a good formation. Actually, I am not sure how to rate this shape, it might be worth trying. What I do know, however, is that there is a terrible defect at E, when white plays here black's corner is gone for sure.

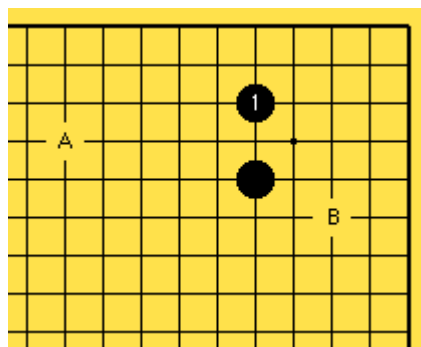
Diagram 6, 7 & 8

By the way, just because in dias 6-8 black one results in giving black a less optimal shape does not mean that you will never see these kind of formations appear in your own game or pro games. If, for example, in dia 8 white would have a stone at the 6-3 point the position reverts to a perfectly normal joseki.

It is wishful thinking, however, to expect white to be as nice as to approach the black formation in a way which makes black's stones come out excellent. Playing white you might feel the urge to restore the situation to a more common one. A pattern you have seen before and know. This is not what the game is about, however, and if your opponent played a strange move it's up to him to make it work, **there is no reason for helping him along.**

(white 12 in dia 10 is an excellent move with this in mind, white does not make it any easier for black by keeping distance and playing solid)

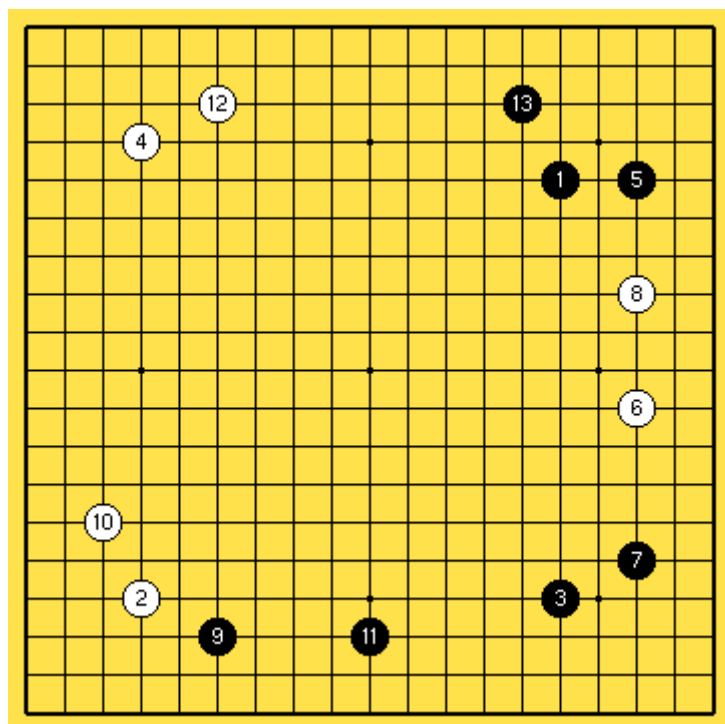
Common Follow-Up



Which brings me back to black 1 in dia 9. This follow-up move is most often seen in pro games and is a standard continuation. Which is to say that black is persistent in his far-out strategy, playing close to the corner but not claiming it as yet. Next black can try to put his formation to good use in moyo making (or fighting) in the direction of A. Or black can aim at playing B, making a thin 20 points of territory. ("thin" meaning that depending on white stones in the neighborhood black will be hard put to keep his corner territory unharmed)

Diagram 9

No Territory

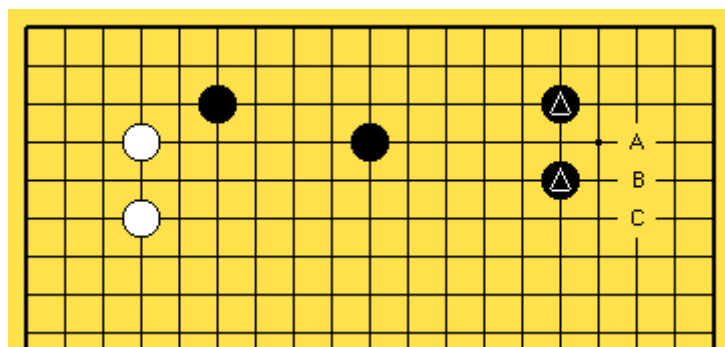


Black: Kato Atsushi 6d
White: Yoda Norimoto 9d
White wins by resign, October 1996.

In this game black choose to ensure the corner playing 13. A little later, however, white successfully invaded at the 3-3 point and black's territory vanished. This would have been all right if black had some weak white stones as a target to attack and possibly capture. Unfortunately this was not the case, thus failing to put his stones to good use black had to resign. Formation like 3-7 and 1-5-13 are possible but not at all easy to handle skillfully.

Diagram 10

White Can Invade at Will



To be perfectly honest, I do not feel comfortable with the triangle marked formation in dia 11. To play two moves in the corner and still be completely open and not able to stop white from invading at A, B or C is not to my liking. If, for example, black made a framework as in dia 11 I feel this must compensate for the open-skirted corner. As it is, however, black cannot count on more than 12-20 points, not counting the corner.

Diagram 11

Now we have a bunch of plausible sounding reasons why you should never play at 5-5. And, perhaps, the best thing to do is to stop reading right here get on with your life, forgetting about the existence of this weird move completely and be happy.

Thank you for staying with me, coming this far shows courage. By still being here however, you admit that you're interested in the 5-5 move. So, I think it is time for you to try the 5-5 move in your own games a couple of times to see how you like it. Play it a couple of times in one or two corners and then go over the rest of Gentle Joseki 7. You will appreciate the rest even more after having faced similar situations in your own games.

Let's have a look at another aspect of the 5-5 move. **What happens if white does not keep his distance and chooses to play an approach move?**

How to Enter

How to Enter the Corner

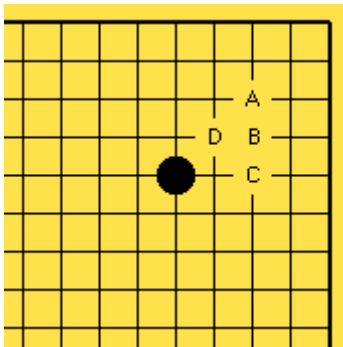


Diagram 12

Trust me on this, only few players can resist the temptation and usually within a couple of moves your opponent will play at A, B, C or D. For all of you who were expecting fabulous hamete (trick) moves or aggressive counter measures for black when white enters the corner I have to disappoint you. There are no tricks worth mentioning involved with the 5-5 corner. The only "trickery" thing about it is that white most of the time does think that the strange looking 5-5 move cannot possibly be any good no way, no how. In this he his wrong, this misperception can be exploited.

Entering at the 3-3 Point

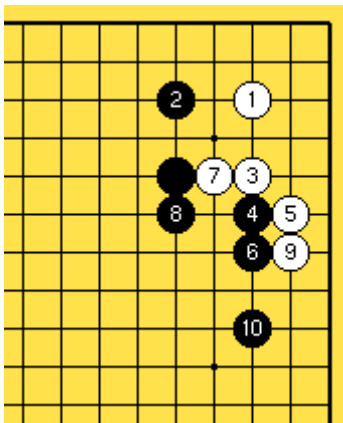


Diagram 13

When white enters at the 3-3 point in dia 13 black does not need to do anything special. By playing steady moves black seals white in most effectively and the result is not to white's liking. Although playable under certain circumstances white should not volunteer to be locked up like this.

Variation

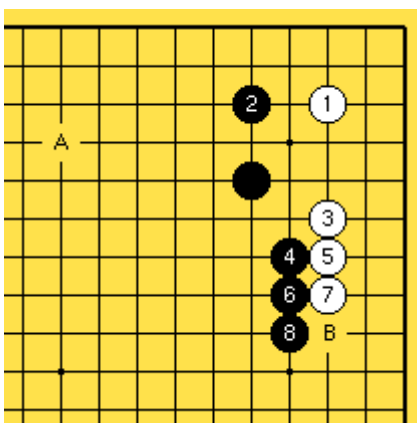


Diagram 14

In dia 14 white jumped two spaces, disliking the idea of being locked up. Black, again, plays very calmly and pushes white along the third line. The result is nice for black and either extending towards A or blocking at B next is extremely big.

Conclusion, white should not hurry entering at the 3-3 point.

Entering at the 4-3 Point

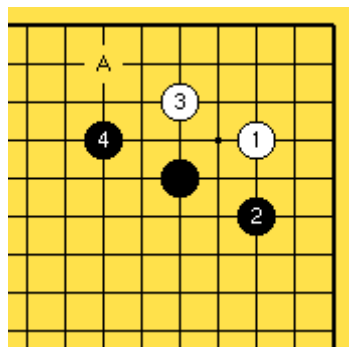


Diagram 15

Entering at the 4-3 point is often a better move compared to entering at 3-3. The territory white can make is a little bigger and while white is solid the black stones feel a little thin. After black 4 white often slides at A. This, however, is not necessary as black cannot expect to kill the white stones if white were to omit playing at A. The result after white A is unclear. Black has more or less sealed his opponent but his stones are by no means thick. Very much depends on the black player's ability to create an impressive moyo (oversized territory) or his fighting skills. It is, however, a very, very thin line between black stones (2-4) which are skillfully keeping a weak white group from linking up with the corner stones or the same black stones which get gobbled-up after being sandwiched between two white positions.

Joseki Like But...

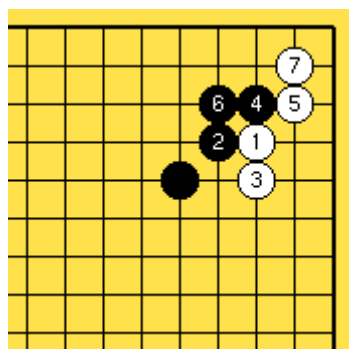


Diagram 16

The result in dia 16 is not good for black. By trying to play what feels like a "normal" joseki line black ignores the purpose of the 5-5 point. Black always should first be concerned with getting stones at the outside, preferably locking white up in the corner. After white 7 black has gained neither territory nor influence.

Entering at the 5-3 Point

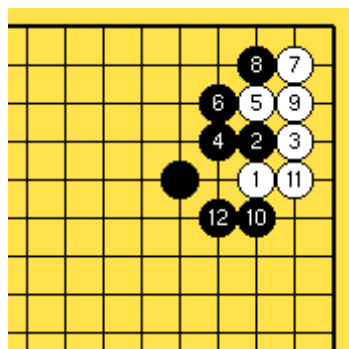
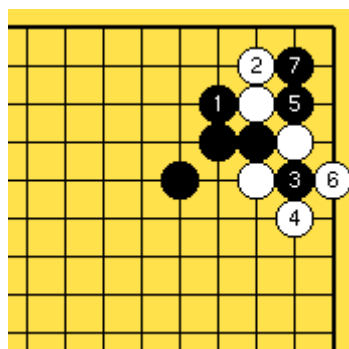


Diagram 17

From my own experience I can tell you that white 1 is by far the most popular way of entering the corner, at igs 3d* level that is. The contact play of black 2 is a resourceful reply to white 1. A natural way of playing out the situation is shown in dia 17. On an empty board this result favors black and this sequence is consequently not a joseki. Black 6, by the way, is perfectly timed. Although white would like to extend to 8 this is not an option.

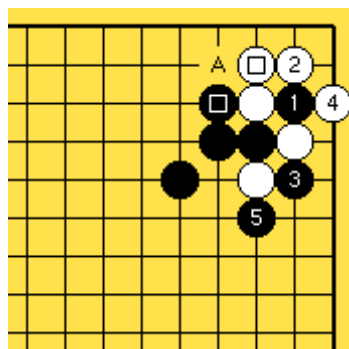
Do Not Stretch



After black 1 white 2 is a bad move. If, for example, black cuts at 3 white will get an inferior position. Also note that the exchange white 2-black 7 is terrible for white.

Diagram 17a

All About Shape



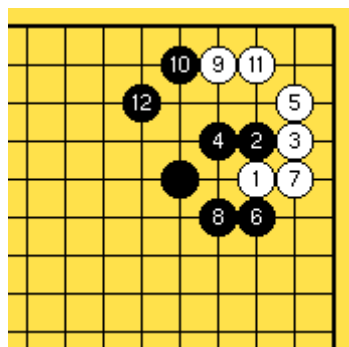
Black can also cut at 1 and get a good result, although I prefer to play as in dia 17a. The result in dia 17b can also be judged by looking if in the final position any strange exchanges have been made. What I mean is: suppose black "[]" and white "[]" were the last moves played here. Now why in the name of all Go-Saints would white answer black "[]" with any other move than the play (hane) at A?

Diagram 17b

This kind of thinking may seem trivial and not to the point. If you think so then I only can beg you to take the following advice to heart since this is exactly what all that "Good Shape" - "Bad Shape" talk is all about.

Judging a sequence by looking for and determining if any questionable exchanges are made is **the most powerful tool** you have to judge a result correctly. And the beautiful thing is, you do not need to be a high-leveled dan player in order to apply it to your own games! When thinking like this, however, do not forget that two strange exchanges, one played by you and one played by your opponent, cancel each other out. It is also true that given enough compensation for having played a bad-shape move can justify it. On the other hand, it is next to impossible to obtain a good result by having played 2-3 questionable exchanges more than your opponent.

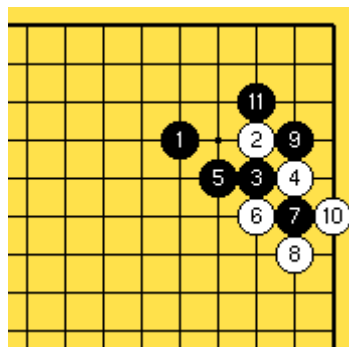
Another Variation



Dia 18 shows a variation for white. After white 5 black still attaches at 6, white 7 follows and black pulls back at 8. Black 10 is a very sharp move but the best white can do is reinforcing at 11. To make most of black's shape 12 is an exquisite play. The result again favors black, but remember, the board is **never** empty.

Diagram 18

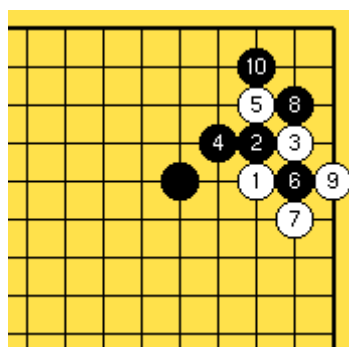
A 5-4 Joseki



I should have called dia 19 reference diagram 1 because it is not about the 5-5 move, or is it? The shape after 1-6 is similar as with the 5-5 variation shown in dia 17. Dia 19 shows a common 5-4 joseki, if white with 8 captures black 9 black captures white 6 in a ladder.

Diagram 19

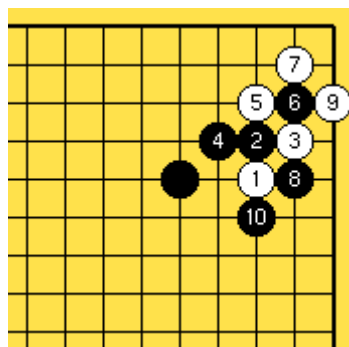
Not So Good for Black



To apply the joseki shown in dia 19 to the 5-5 move, however, is not correct. The sequence shown in dia 20 is not a joseki; the result is judged inferior for black.

Diagram 20

Not So Good Either

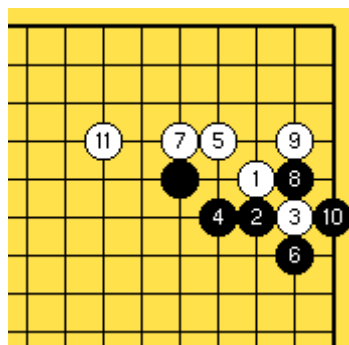


Even if black 6 is played at the inside white immediately goes after the cutting stone and captures it with 9. Again this result is not satisfactory for black.

Diagram 21

Note, however, that if the game is well underway and the opening stage is more or less finished then black might be glad with the results in dia 20, 21. Especially dia 20 seems to be not too bad at all.

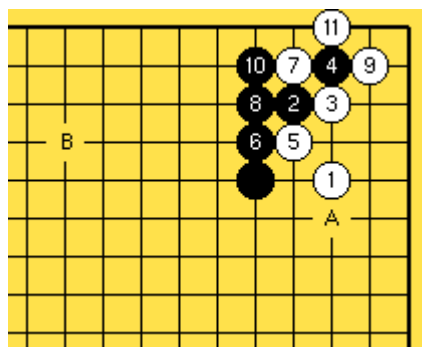
Attaching at the Outside



To attach at the outside right away does not give black a convincing result either. In dia 22 you can see that white makes a lot of profit and that black's outside position does not make up for the points lost in the corner. If black plays 6 at 7 white extends at 6 and gets a good result too.

Diagram 22

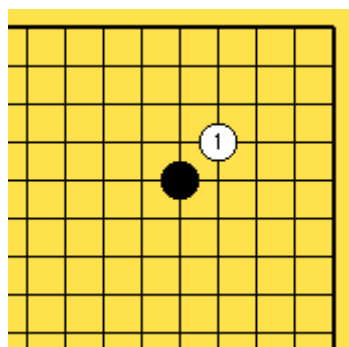
A 4-3 Joseki



It is possible to revert this situation to a ko-moku (4-3 point) joseki when switching the order of black 2 and the move at the 5-5 point. After white 11 black can chose to play A or B. The result as shown in dia 23 is good enough for black and he is not complaining.

Diagram 23

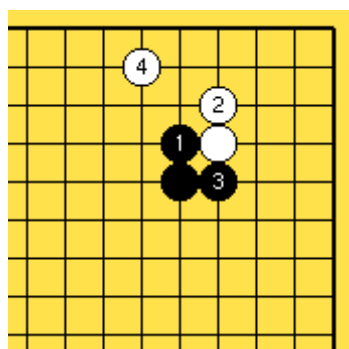
Entering at 4-4



The remaining possible move for white to enter the corner under the 5-5 point is the play at hoshi (4-4 point) as shown in dia 24

Diagram 24

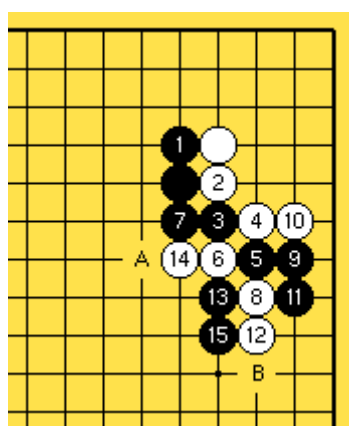
Influence Again



For black it is very important to judge the surrounding situation correctly before deciding how to use his 5-5 stone. In dia 25 a straightforward variation is shown. The result may look good for white (it certainly is not bad for white) but is playable for black, too. He has sente and black can continue with is influence oriented playing style somewhere else.

Diagram 25

White Travels a Dark Path

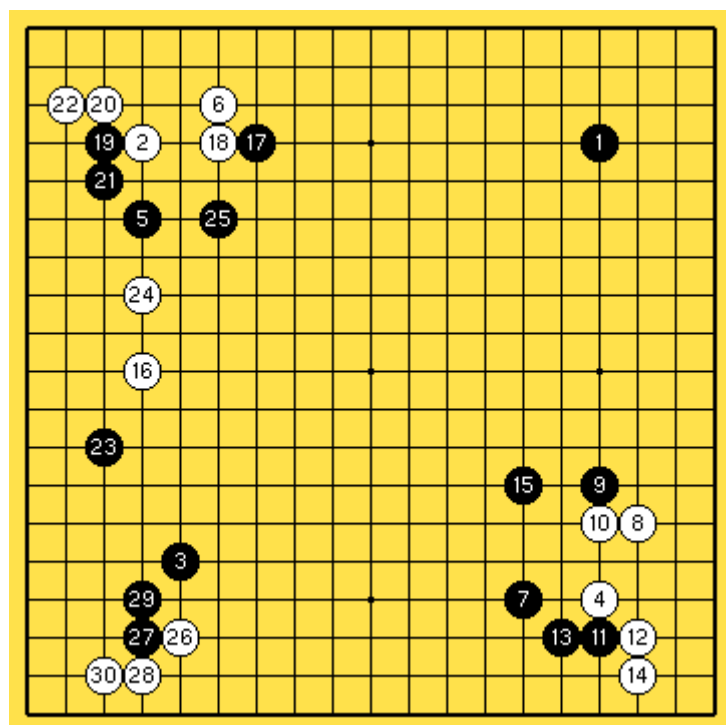


White might try the unhealthy looking moves of 4 and 6. If the ladder is good for black he can play like dia 26. After black 15 black can capture two white stones at either A or B. If the ladder is not favorable for black there are other ways of getting a satisfactory result. That is again, unfortunately, a bunch of diagrams not given this time.

Diagram 26

And for the main feature (ahum, ahum) of Gentle Joseki 7 the opening of a game I played at igs. Both players are level 34*.

Who Let the Dogs Out?



Black: me

White: m***y

I do not pretend that you'll learn from going through this game. To be honest, you might very well play two stones weaker because of it. I usually combine high approach moves like black 5 and 7 with a 5-5 opening. The shoulder hits at 9 and 17 are also played with the idea of making "something" (anything) towards the center. When black, till white's surprise, did not go under in a fierce fight white asked for adjournment and the game was suspended at move 136 with mutual consent. Black 15 is not a very good move, I'm afraid, it is very thin. You, of course, now know what black's next move should be, don't you?

Diagram 27

P.S. Not all Yamashita's games include plays at the 5-5 point but some of them do and if you'd like to go through his games download them through [Yamashita Keigo's biography page](#).

Appendix 01

Index of joseki's mentioned in this episode:

